

Highlights

- While the international community tries to combat unprofessionalism in the Republika Srpska media, with sharp critique and warnings of possible jamming, RS media fight back with their own version of reality. Audiences of Srpska Radio-Television, and readers of *Glas Srpski*, in the past fortnight, could by now be convinced that the world is launching a campaign of terrorist violence and chemical warfare against the RS
- Investigative Journalism - The Werewolf Team of *Slobodna Bosna*
- Monitoring Report Opens A Correspondence Column

Monitoring Report

*A review of the B&H media published by Media Plan and the Institute for War & Peace Reporting
Volume 3 • Issue 2
July 26 1997*

'DOGS OF WAR'

SFOR's New Image in the RS Media

The RS state media responded to international criticism with a barrage of journalistic excesses. International support for the beleaguered RS president, Biljana Plavsic, and SFOR's 'Tango' operation in Prijedor fitted neatly into Srpska Radio-Television's concept of a global campaign against Serb nationhood. This concept received its most emotive colouring from the media of the divided city of Brcko, already hotly involved with the issues of voter registration and return. Events of the last fortnight roused them to war-time levels of animosity, xenophobia and paranoia - currently unrivalled in any other town of BiH.

Insect Warfare

Srpska Television told viewers on July 17 that chemical warfare was being waged against the RS by the international community. The presenter read out an article (by Goran Maunaga) titled 'Scientific Militarism', from the June 8 issue of *Javnost*. (Printed by *Glas Srpski*, this weekly magazine was founded in 1992 by 'the government of the RS'). The article spoke of: 'Instant danger from poisonous materials sprayed from aircraft... on a daily basis... a multitude of beetles and reptiles as well as a variety of

unknown kinds of insect... a type of mosquito that moves sluggishly in bitter cold, but still survives.'

SRT's Brcko studio explored the theme on July 15, when reacting to 'Tango': the killing of Simo Drljac, and the arrest of Dr Milan Kovacevic. SRT Brcko commentator Nedjo Djurevic, calling SFOR 'Al-Capone mobsters' and 'dogs of war' went on to visualise an international conspiracy of 'mobsters from Masonic lodges'. 'Not satisfied with the NATO bombardment of the Serbs, and grenades strengthened with uranium, which are causing people throughout the RS to suffer radiation sickness', these 'gangsters' are now using 'secret lists and hysterical killings' to 'create a feeling of collective guilt among the Serbs, and to force them to bow their heads in acceptance of... a united Bosnia.'

Srpska TV's July 15 commentary on 'Tango' was also picturesque: 'The crisis concerning the state leaders of the RS is being constantly expanded in the kitchens of the international community, whose chefs are mixing directly in RS internal affairs, using the conflicts at the head of the RS to impose their will on the state institutions and..to drown the RS in a unified BiH.'

In response to the Office of the High Representative's statement that 'SRT creates a paranoid atmosphere with its selection of quotations from RS officials, and its own commentary.' STV retorted 'TV statements are not the same as the killing and arrest of innocent people in a country and among a nation whose hospitality has been brutally abused' (17/7).

Below are samples of SRT journalism in the monitored period:

Selection of Quotations: SRT asked its own staff to provide comments on the station. The result could be heard on the July 16 newscast: a lengthy compliment on the 'heroism' and professionalism of SRT journalists. SRT ran, on July 18, a selective vox-pop of Prijedor salesmen refusing to sell 'even chewing gum' to internationals 'who want to destroy us - so we will never serve them.' SRT Brcko, on July 14, aired citizens protesting 'at the pursuit of the Serb nation', (as the reporter described 'Tango'). 'Why and for what reason are they killing only us, without trial, without any possibility of defence... under the law of force?' All quotes matched SRT's own commentary.

MONITORING REPORT

Published by the
Institute for War & Peace Reporting and
Media Plan

Project Director: Zlatko Dizdarevic
Editorial Team: Zlatko Dizdarevic,
Aleksandra Scepanovic & Marina Bowder
Monitoring Team: MEDIA PLAN

IWPR is an independent conflict-monitoring and media-support charity working to inform the international debate on conflict and provide a platform and other support for voices of moderation caught in conflict.



Media Plan is an independent organisation monitoring, training and developing the Bosnian media.



MEDIA PLAN

Monitoring Report is free of charge, and reprinting with credit is encouraged. IWPR and Media Plan gratefully acknowledge the support of the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for support for this project. Other media training, development and research projects carried out by Media Plan and IWPR in Bosnia are supported by the European Union, US Information Agency, National Endowment for Democracy and Winston Foundation for World Peace.

Bosnia:

Obala Kulina bana 4/I, 71000 Sarajevo, tel/fax:
(387 71) 667 734/5

E-mail:

MEDIAPLAN_ZU@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org
101657.3100@compuserve.com

UK:

Lancaster House, 33 Islington High St., London
N1 9LH

E-mail: warreport@iwpr.org.uk

US:

Box 2617, New York, NY 10185,
tel: (1 212) 688-1451, fax: (1 212) 371-4054
E-mail: uswarreport@igc.apc.org

For back issues and other information, visit
our Web site:

<http://www.demon.co.uk/iwpr/iwpr.htm>

Camera Work: During a 75-second silence, STV's camera panned in on posters of Karadzic being displayed apparently everywhere - 'like the dawn, in new, picturesque clothing' as the presenter concluded at the end. (18/7). On the other hand, the reporter who covered a Bijelina rally in support of Biljana Plavsic, and maintained that 'only 2% of residents' were present, was refuted by the camera panning over a massed crowd (15/7).

Terminology: 'Alleged' and 'so-called' are correctly prefixed to the words 'war criminal' - but only when the criminal in question is Serb. 'Professor', rather than 'President' is now a frequent title for Biljana Plavsic. Attempts in Banja Luka to terrorise the international community were apparently spontaneous 'explosions and detonations'.

Sourcing: Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, president of the Bijelina Democrats, led a group who hurled eggs at SRT's Bijelina studio (16/7). Three days later STV's presenter read out a list, obtained from 'well-informed sources' of suspected war-criminals: Radoslav Brdjanin, Vojo Kupresanin, Predrag Radic (all Plavsic supporters), Ljubisa Savic-Mauzer, and Biljana Plavsic.

Creativity: As the crisis sparked off by Plavsic's dismissal of RS Minister of Internal Affairs and chief of police Dragan Kijac, escalated, SRT ran, from a village near Rogatica, the news of 'a Muslim terrorist group prevented in its aim of spreading chaos and panic among householders.' STV showed Serb police removing a grenade from the pocket of an unidentified body in an unidentified place. Viewers were left with a vision of Serb police doing their duty and safeguarding civilians. As far as Monitoring Report can ascertain, the entire story was a fabrication.

White and Spiritually Beautiful

Biljana Plavsic's request to the international community to impose a protectorate (6/7) on RS media was seen by SRT to be 'synchronised immediately an army of enthusiastic racially-correct Western speakers in Muslim Sarajevo, orchestrated by well-known local Muslim trouble-makers, created among our people the fearful impression that, as of tomorrow, Srpska Radio-Television will be run by a bunch of Arabs, blacks,

Mongolians, and other exemplary international experts, of spiritual beauty and fascinating education, such as Alex Ivanko, Duncan Bullivant, David Foley or Simon Hazelock' (16/7).

SRPSKA RTV , RTV BIH, HRVATSKA RTV HERCEG- BOSNA

Monitors of TV BiH in the past fortnight, unlike those watching Srpska TV, had comparatively little to report in the way of journalistic slip-ups. However, TV BiH is not free from Srpska RTV's habit of mixing of redundant commentary with news. 'There is no doubt at all that the events in Sandzak (where Bosniak locals have been demonstrating against harassment by the Belgrade regime) were projected in the cabinet of Slobodan Milosevic'... 'It would be an injustice in the eyes of God if Slobodan Milosevic does not end in The Hague' (July 19).

Srpska TV followed Momcilo Krajsnik devotedly during the monitored period, giving him the most favourable camera shots, often ensuring that only his side of a conversation was heard and only his face seen. TV BiH often takes the same approach to Co-President of the Council of Ministers Haris Silajdzic, citing him at every opportunity. In the monitored period he was shown making six lengthy special announcements on various different topics, which definitely made him TV personality of the fortnight.

In Monitoring Report's view, a serious defect of TV BiH's scheduling is its daily and, from a Bosniak viewpoint, overwhelmingly patriotic, promotive spot for the BiH army, run before every main newscast at 7.30 pm. It sets the tone for a newscast that to some extent justifies Bosnian Croat complaints that TV BiH fails to cater for the Croat members of the BiH Federation.

Medzida Buljubasic was the editor and presenter of 'God's Messenger (the prophet Muhamad's Birthday.' This festival was top news for 4 days in a row, from July 16 to July 19. Egyptian president Mubarak's congratulations to BiH president Alija Izetbegovic took first place on July 16, while Buljubasic told viewers on the 18th that 'Congratulations on the occasion of the birth of God's Messenger were sent to the high functionaries of the Federation and BiH'.

How appropriate Croat and Serb functionaries might have found such greetings, she did not say.

TV BiH, like most of the Sarajevo-based media (with the exception of *Oslobodjenje*) failed to notice the pending removal of three Gorazde Party for Democratic Action (the ruling SDA) representatives from the candidate list. OSCE removals of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and Serb Democratic Party (SDS) candidates from the list are always news. (Compare the Sarajevo daily *Dnevni Avaz* whose July 20 headline 'THE HDZ STOLE 15 000 VOTES' ran across all 5 columns of the title page.)

TV BiH might argue that it is trying to compensate for its counterparts among the Bosnian Croat media, whose line tends to be somewhat harder. For example, Croat Radio-Television Herceg-Bosna thought 'The unequal treatment, on the part of the international community, of Bosniak and Croat refugees, is surprising. While the Muslim refugees swallow up whole truckloads of humanitarian aid, Croat refugees suffer sanctions (7/7).' Meanwhile, the death of Mate Boban, founder of the short lived Herceg-Bosna state, considered by Bosniaks to be a war criminal, was commemorated with 'Croat Knight' 'A great son of Croatia, who freed and established the Croat idea in BiH' (8/7). But by showing genuine impartiality, RTV BiH might woo back the Croat leaders of the Federation, who are now appearing almost daily on the Republic of Croatia's state media.

The Dual Faces of Mostar & Brcko

MOSTAR: The divided city's most hotly contested issue of the monitored period was the unification of the Hercegovacko-Neretvanski Cantonal police. Croat HTV Mostar said, on July 7 - 'The Muslim side did not today allow an agreement about the constitution of the police in the Hercegovacko-Neretvanski Canton.' On the same day, on the other side of the city, TV Mostar was telling its audience - 'An agreement has still not been reached. The main reason is Croat reluctance to accept that the police be constituted according to the 1991 census'.

BRCKO: Whether because elections are nearing, or for other reasons, some of the most colourful quotations of the monitored period are from the media on the RS side of Brcko's divide. *Branski Pogledi*, the fortnightly paper which has provided plenty of material for Monitoring Report's previous issues, again deserves mention:

The SFOR action to arrest two war criminals in Prijedor, was the 17/7 issue's cover page story, titled 'SF-OR-UK'. ('Oruk' in the local language resembles 'ugh' in English). Vida Tesic wrote the commentary: 'And you, gentlemen, having barely exchanged your (first letter) I for S, have turned to punitive expeditions. With the blood of Simo Drljaca you have spread terror throughout the RS, and with the shamefully plotted arrest of Dr Mico Kovacevic, you have opened the hunting season for Serb heads.'

This fortnight, however, *Branski Pogledi* was outdone in pathos by SRT studio Brcko's commentator Nedjo Djurevic:

The Serbs on the left side of the Drina are guilty just because they did not want ...to pray to Allah instead of God.. What are the soldiers of SFOR really after, who on the roads of the RS and the entrances to Brcko and in the luckless city itself pressure the Serbs with their vehicles and maltreat the Serb police? In their hunt, it is possible that the road which has led towards latent peace in the post-Dayton period will change direction. Then the Stabilisation Force will be able, without concealment, to bear their true name of dogs of war' (15/6).

Among RS media outside Brcko, *Glas Srpski* was exceptionally interested in the divided town: the articles of a journalist signed 'MN' covered Brcko news in depth. Brcko Supervisor Robert Farrand recently announced that returnees must carry RS documentation, although it will be valid only until the final arbitration decision. 'MN' seemed to appreciate the decision, contributing an article titled 'Return, With the Acceptance of Loyalty to Srpska' (July 20 -21).

'Satisfactory Response of Citizens' (July 11), was another 'MN' article. This quoted Teodor Gavric, president of the Brcko Local Elections Commission. 'These citizens are pointlessly excluded

from their basic democratic right to vote in the elections because their refugee documents are dated later than 31/7/96.' Gavric did not add that people whose registrations are cancelled are still able to vote at their pre-1991 locations, and 'MN' seems not to have investigated the point (research would have necessitated one phone-call to the local OSCE).

On June 16 there was a further article from 'MN'. 'Deprived of the Right to Vote' on the protest meeting by citizens of Serb Brcko. More than 500 people went spontaneously on to the streets to protest, in front of the OSCE office 'because the basic democratic right to vote had been taken from them' said 'MN'.

'Oh, Investigative Team of Slobodna Bosna'

TV Uno-Sanski Canton (TV USK) carried reactions to an article by 'Slobodna Bosna' (titled 'Is General Atif Dudakovic Behind the Bihac Mafia', July 13), on its main newscast of July 17. A statement from the 'Club of Patriotic leagues' of the municipality of Cazin, was read out in full by presenter Gorica Catakovic. The club members wrote: 'We are observing these days how the so called 'free press' especially *Slobodna Bosna*, is publishing articles about our General and our heroes of this war..Do not touch our General and our heroes, for we are ready to fight all of Europe, if our generals call on us to do so. We are well aware of how and in what way we were slaughtered, raped and robbed..The ingenuity of General Dudakovic, together with the courage of Hamda/Tiger, Emin Pivic, and the Buzim brothers, made the victory of the Bosniak Corps of the Bihac region possible..They are not Mafia. They are all the good, brave, honest and clever men' - at this point the presenter nearly wept - 'this nation has. You have stricken a blow, under the cover of bloody, steely democracy, against your own suffering people..can't you ever have enough of Bosniak blood? Don't be werewolves and lap the blood of your own people. Where have you strayed to, oh investigative team of *Slobodna Bosna*?'

Viewers were not given any idea of the contents of the original article. Incidentally, the issue of *Slobodna Bosna* containing the article sold out completely - local rumours suggest it was burned.

Media Re-Shape the BiH Map

Journalists in the former Yugoslavia seem uncertain from time to time of where current boundaries lie. Often their mistakes suggest simple confusion: occasionally possible territorial speculation.

Monitors have noticed that Srpska RTV news from the 'Muslim-Croat' Federation is always pasted in the news-bloc 'From Abroad', while football players from the Federation of Yugoslavia are 'our representatives', 'our selection.' On TV BiH the latest news from Sandzak was at first placed in the domestic news bloc (12/7), before being transferred, together with the Montenegro leadership conflicts, to the 'From Abroad' section.

Dnevne Nezavisne Novine (Daily Independent News, RS): has a 'Domestic News' (supposedly BiH news) section, which, in the July 12-13 issue, covered events in Banja Luka, Mostar and Zvornik. Confusingly, however, Pristina (Serbia) and Podgorica (Montenegro) were included as well. On July 7, Sarajevo and Belgrade both got into the 'Domestic News' and the 'Ex-Yugoslavia' news simultaneously.

Croatia TV's 'Motriste' of July 8 held out little hope for Croat refugees returning to the Federation town of Zepce: 'It looks like part of a future Muslim mini-state' said the reporter.

Media of the Fortnight:

Split-based paper *Slobodna Dalmacija*, widely read in Croat-controlled areas of Federation BiH was more focused than most Federation media and all Bosnian Croat media on events in the RS. It carried agency information from several sources on all Plavsic's conferences, and quoted her criticisms of the Pale leaders as 'Leeches Sucking Blood' (7/7). It also quoted an interview which Alija Izetbegovic gave to the independent Belgrade-based weekly magazine NIN in which he accused Croat extremists of still nurturing dreams of annexing BiH to a so-called Great Croatia. 'Croat Illusions' (date). *Slobodna Dalmacija* was more objective than the Bosnian Croat media in its obituary for Mate Boban (8/7),

praising him as 'A Man For Difficult Times' (headline), but adding 'Among Croats themselves..there are those who..urge that he insisted on the division of BiH and the so-called humane resettlement of Croats from central Bosnia, and blame him for unsatisfactory cooperation with the Muslim leadership. Evidence will show what Mate Boban could have done differently.'

What's on: Electronic Media

Tuzlansko-Podrinjski Canton (Eastern Bosnia) TV (TV TPK): turned a concert by the Sarajevo Philharmonic into an opportunity to promote the SDA, which had sponsored the concert - even omitting to mention the name of the special-guest conductor who visited from Vienna. The composer, Asim Horozic, who was being performed for the first time in Tuzla, was also neglected (9/7).

TV Zenica (central Bosnia): The opening of Zenica's new plumbing system managed to become a promotional spot for the SDA.

TV TPK's presenter said that the Serb police 'did not want' to guarantee safety to the Serb Civic Council on its visit to the Brcko zone of separation; a free interpretation of reporter

Mirsad Arnautovic's statement that 'they were not able' (17/7).

Srpska RTV: ran a BBC programme quoting the Office of the High Representative's sharp criticisms of the RS media, for unprofessional reporting (22/7). However, this station did not include the quote 'Pale television is the biggest spreader of lies in the whole of Europe.'

What's in: The Press

Glas Srpski: (on the burning of its July 19 issue by anonymous persons, in front of the city hall in Banja Luka). 'Even in our dreams we never expected that at the beginning of the 21st century a Serb paper, written by obviously Serb journalists, could be burned on a bonfire lit by Serb hands' (20/7).

(SRT's board comment 'The Only Serb Daily Paper').

Glas Srpski headlined Belgrade (now American) lawyer Nikola Kostic's

interview with Vecernje Novine, in which he said that Brcko could not belong to the Federation, but might be neutrally placed under BiH as a state, as 'Brcko for the Serbs' (15/7).

Branski Pogledi has lately been advertising its serial on war criminals - all Bosnjaks or Croats, termed war-criminals according to the paper's own criteria. When this was banned by the Brcko Supervisor, the paper promised readers that 'the serial "Criminal" will be printed in full in your and our newspaper as soon as conditions are right'. Meanwhile the meetings of the local Cetnik association were covered, as usual, and novelty was provided by a letter from the Chicago Cetnik association (17/7)

Branski Pogledi editors made no attempt to conceal their view of registration as a demonstration of patriotism: 'CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO CITIZENS ON THE EXCEPTIONAL TURNOUT FOR REGISTRATION' (17/7).

Media News:

A historic moment on Sarajevo-based Independent TV Hayat: the programme 'Voice of America' was broadcast live from Washington by satellite for the first time on July 21. The two Washington-based presenters, Ivica Puljic and Dzejana Pecanin-Alison are conducting interviews with opposition party leaders on a daily basis.

TV Zenica reported that there are 26 media in the Zenicko-Dobojski Canton, employing 80 journalists, 12 of whom are qualified.

TV TPK announced on July 17 that it was ceasing to broadcast TV BiH's main Dnevnik, owing to the poor quality of the transmission it received. Monitoring Report called TV BiH to ask its opinion: the staff member who took the call had no idea that the Dnevnik had ever been broadcast by TV TPK, and commented, 'But, of course, this is a cowboy state.'

Letters to the Editors of Monitoring Report

Monitoring Report would like to print your reactions to our issues, on a regular basis. Last fortnight's issue produced so many reader responses that we felt compelled to open a correspondence

column for your suggestions and comments. Monitoring Report reserves the right to edit your letters if space is a problem. Some letters we received in the past fortnight are below:

LOUSY LANGUAGE

Professor Dave Parnas, Ontario, Canada: Who are the authors of these reports? What are their qualifications?

'Reading the loaded, inflammatory and imprecise language that fills this report ("lousy", "slavish", "mouthpiece" and other such words), I thought that the report's comment on SRT, "There was no attempt at an independent, objective analysis of either position" described this report as well.

I thought that the authors of these reports would set an example for their colleagues by showing high journalistic standards. I thought that they would provide objective data and balanced opinions. I was disappointed.

NAMING NAMES

Semir Tanovic, Glendale, New York, USA

'This is a fantastic report. I only wish it mentioned the names of all the reporters whose stories were referred to. If names of the journalists and editors had been mentioned, the report would have had a bigger weight, it would also identify the creators of false news. Many of them were involved in creating the false news and hatred mongering (as mean and incriminating as Goebbels') in the beginning of the war. This would create a basis for moral and professional responsibility (in some cases even a criminal responsibility) for the future, once the sobering up starts.'

DON'T BE CYNICS

Alija Behram, on behalf of RTV Mostar, FBiH

We are taken by surprise by descriptions that are neither founded nor well-argued and therefore suspect that this might be an intentional fraud produced by the haters of this medium...we don't want to comment on the persistent attempt to level the media in Mostar. a light and a dark side of

Mostar have been in existence for a long time...and a long time ago the world realised on which side to look for light, and where to intervene and put pressure. Mildly speaking, it is regrettable to balance a medium which according to all standard thinking..reached desirable standards of media freedom, and openness, with a medium that is a classic mouthpiece of the HDZ... Someone might now try to view RTV Mostar, in the inexact and outdated style of certain circles who believe that Mostar is an arena of squabblers, and that guilt is equal on both sides of the Neretva. Otherwise, the monitoring is welcome, whoever produces it. Our warm recommendation is that evaluations should be all-inclusive, and not based on a hunt for deficiencies...We feel the Monitoring Report wants to be both a prosecutor and a judge, and it loses respect in our eyes because of the cynical message closing the final issue: 'Are you worried that your paper or station wasn't mentioned above? Don't worry, it probably will be.'

On June 18, in 'Ogledalo', Medina Delibasic of TV Zenica, pointed out that Monitoring Report's last issue wrongly described her as calling Banja Luka a 'tragic city' when she in fact called it a 'sad' city. Monitoring Report would like to apologise to her for this misunderstanding.

COMING NEXT FORTNIGHT:

- Independent- or Just Non-Controversial:
INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN BIH
- Profile:
A RECENTLY-FOUNDED INDEPENDENT (RS) MEDIUM.

The editors welcome correspondence from all our readers. Contributors will not be identified without their prior permission. Please send all comments to alan@iwprorg.uk